1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

595 ly badgered her husband into marrying a young girl. He finally acceded to her wishes and chose a previously unmarried girl from a nearby village. The bridewealth and marriage expenses sent the man into great debt, but he decided that it was worth it because of the increased prestige and because he believed his wife would now stop agitating him about it and have a young friend in the house that she said she had wanted for a long time. Only three weeks afterwards the senior wife began to to demand that the husband get rid of the new wife. "The young one was not helpful," she said, and she also accused the husband of favoring his new wife over her. Finally she threatened to leave if the new wife was not disposed of and the confused husband, worried over his debts, and angered because of her change in attitude let her go and divorced her rather than accede to her new demands. In another case a man announced to his wife that he was going to marry a new wife, and she flew into a towering rage which lasted for several days. She was only mildly contained by the many gifts and had several outbursts of temper during the wedding ceremony.

593 590 562 837 521 Although men are dominant by force of tradition, discrepancies are very common in everyday life. I have observed women leaving their husbands' compound against their wishes, and many are said to be unfaithful sexually. Indeed this is a favorite topic of conversation and men who are intimate friends tell jokes about who is having an affair with whose wife. Some women openly flaunt their husband's authority by threatening to leave him if he refuses to allow them their own way. In many cases such inconsistency between the expectations of husband and wife relations and the realities of everyday married life lead to divorce.

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Only rare Kanuri have not been divorced once or twice during their lifetime, and many have divorced three and often four times; eight or nine divorces is not uncommon. When explaining divorces, husbands complain of their wives cooking badly, or not on time, or not enough; they also complain of visits to relatives and friends that they felt were unnecessary, of attendance at public dances or ceremonies, of their wives being dirty, or of adultery; but always they mention and stress some activity that involves the wife's disobedience. Wives when speaking of divorces complain of their husband's intolerance, of their activities outside the household, of their stinginess, or their lack of sexual attention or skill, or of their extra-marital affairs; sometimes they complain of co-wives, or the husband's lack of appreciation of their services, especially their cooking.

Most divorces occur in the first five years of marriage, and the husband almost always formally initiates divorce proceedings. This results from the fact that the bridewealth must be returned if the wife officially initiates the divorce. Generally speaking, women can informally initiate a divorce by behaving so badly that the husband has no recourse but to send her packing, thus forfeiting his bridewealth and submitting to her wish. In one case I knew, the mother and older brother of the young girl instructed her to behave badly because they disapproved of her husband's wish to take her to the city. He took her anyway but by the end of a month found it impossible to live with her and had to send her back to her relatives in the rural area. In a few cases women initiate divorces rather more forcefully. A favorite technique in this regard is to grab the husband by the collar of his robe and scream at him, "I won't let go until you say, 'I divorce you.'" A crowd gathers and the man invariably then capitulates by saying, "I divorce you." In very

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dug in the sandy soil between the ankles and the infant then has a simple and comforting toilet ready made for it by the mother. Afterwards its loins are washed and the hole covered up with sand. During the entire infant stage breast-feeding is carried on easily and simply upon demand by the infant for the breast. Indeed the breast is generally used as a pacifier.

A typical scene in a mother's hut illustrates the way in which the introduction of a new baby to society is carried out. The mother and her friends sit around chatting and they pass the baby around, dandling it in turn, although the baby remains with the mother for a large part of the time. A very common topic of conversation at such times is, quite unsurprisingly, the new baby. But unlike a similar group of American ladies most of the talk is *to* and not *about* the baby. The mother and many of those present tell the uncomprehending infant in sing-song voices about its kindred, "So-and-so is your father, so-and-so is your brother, so-and-so is your sister," and so on through a vast complex of kinship links on both the mother's and the father's side of the family. The infant is also told in the same way about its neighborhood, its section of the town, or its village, its political leaders, and so on. "So-and-so is your village head, so-and-so is your district head, and this is your tribe and this is your emirate, and this is your *Shehu*, and so-and-so is your Waziri." The family occupation is also mentioned and how soon the infant is going to help in such-and-such activities around the compound and grow up into successful adulthood within the framework of all the associations and expectations that are referred to constantly.

Why tell a baby about its social connections, occupational expectations, political affiliations, and so on? Certainly later on, when it can understand a little more of the language, such talk is a means of initiating it into the social groupings of the society. However at this stage another function is performed. The child is a new member of the society, and it is being introduced into and given a recognizable place in its social setting. The new member means new relationships. So-and-so who did not have a younger brother's son, now has one; someone else now has a new cousin and perhaps a future spouse; or someone else now has a sister's son or an additional one. The coming of the *tiful* or infant creates changes because a new member has been added and in introducing it to society people are asked to shift their understanding of the organizations which now must include this new member. By constantly referring to these new relationships during the infant's first few months people close to the family affirm to themselves and finally to others the fact that many relationships are different now that the new baby has arrived safely.

As far as training goes, the *tiful* is too young to be very harshly dealt with or to be told not to do this or that. Its primary task is to survive and grow into a useful, law-abiding, member of its community.

Childhood

Infancy ends as weaning begins, about the end of the eighteenth month although a good deal of variation exists in actual practice so that many are weaned earlier. In general weaning is carried out with a matter-of-fact attitude as if to say,

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level and still make a profit. He will not give credit to strangers, but must have done business with the man successfully or have some previous knowledge of him, his family, his agnates, or any one else who would be responsible for him if he were taken into court for a bad debt. Nevertheless, with each retailer taking about two to four dollars worth of nuts it takes only a few bad debts to whittle away his fifteen dollar profit into a loss, and he has had a number of these on which it took several later trips to recoup his losses. Ajimi, however, is very philosophical and entertains his friends for hours telling stories about his bad debts to point up the moral that a kola nut seller's life is not a happy one.

AJIMI'S UNCLE Finally let us look at Ajimi's uncle, his father's older brother who lives in the city and runs, because of his access to liquid capital, a relatively large trading organization along traditional lines.

Ajimi's uncle is a man of fifty-five years who has three wives and a concubine as well as a son and a younger brother's son living in his large compound in Maiduguri. He generally has several *tada njima* living in the compound, and in the near vicinity are those of his other married *tada njima* who are part of his organization.

His mode of operation is fairly simple; he gives out money to men like Ajimi to trade with, and then takes one half or more of the profits. Some of these men are connected by kinship to the uncle; others, indeed most of them, are not. Those who are not, start out in his compound as low status *tada njima;* they carry water, cut grass for the horses, run messages, and so on. For this they receive their food, shelter, clothing, and a little pocket money. If over a period of one to two years they prove respectable and trustworthy, Ajimi's uncle gives them some money and sends them out to trade, usually with someone more experienced at first, then on their own. The following list indicates both the range and number of his enterprises:

1. Two men buy millet in Geidam for sale in Maiduguri going to the Geidam market once every week or two.
2. One man sells cloth in Damasac. The cloth is supplied to him by Ajimi's uncle who buys it in larger quantities for sale in several places. This same man is given money to buy onions and ship them to Damasac where they are scarce and high priced.
3. One man buys fish at Abadan on Lake Chad and sells it in Maiduguri.
4. Another man buys natron in Bama (to the southeast of Bornu) for sale in Maiduguri.
5. Several (from one to three) buy cattle in Bornu and sell them in Kano.
6. Several (one to three) buy cattle in Bornu and sell them in Makurdi.
7. One man purchases butter in Damaturu (Fulani country) and sells it in Maiduguri.
8. One (Ajimi) sells kola nuts in Magumeri and used to buy ground-nuts for sale in the capital.

The organization involves anywhere from eleven to sixteen men (the number varies over time) and their families, and probably involves a turnover of about $1200 to $1500 per month with a maximum profit margin of anywhere from thirty to forty percent on the investment. By Bornu standards Ajimi's uncle is a wealthy

593 wife (non-secluded) is also a productive asset in farming activities.
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[558] Women are fully aware in every marriage they enter to what extent their husbands are dependent upon them for the maintenance of their socio-economic status in the community, and are fully prepared at all times to manipulate their husbands, using the threat of easy divorce to break down his traditional right of domination and assert their independence within the marriage relationship. This obtains in economically low status households where the man has some difficulty in obtaining enough capital to marry. In its extreme form, given a timid husband with one wife of low status socially and economically, and an independent woman, this variable may create a completely female dominated household. Other men tend to gossip about such marriages speaking
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[837] of them as ridiculous jokes upon the poor, weak husband and scandalous, shameful behaviour on the part of the wife who usually includes open sexual freedom as a part of her dominant position. When questioned about such marriages, however, informants adopt a somewhat fatalistic attitude and comment that there is nothing the unfortunate man can do, since he needs a wife so badly and has not the necessary economic power
[183] available to him to assert his rights. Thus the cultural pattern of male dominance must be supported by real social instruments; if the male's status is overly dependent upon his wife, it becomes almost impossible for the cultural ideal of female subordination to function
593 properly. This is why higher ranking males can expect higher accord-
565 ance with traditional standards on the part of their wives. If they
183 are successful men, then all they wish from their wives is good, proper, ethical conduct, which includes submissiveness. At this level, the married status of the woman requires that she must meet her husband's demands for wifely behaviour or he will get rid of her. The operation

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264 economic and rural/urban status. In upper class households, food may be taken regularly three, four, or even five times during a day, with a larger variety in the items included. Thus in the household of an N.A. employee in Magumeri, there are four separate meals in one day, and sometimes five - (1) early in the morning just after rising, millet porridge and a plain soup is taken, plus a small course of bòlèm (milk, rice or wheat, and sugar); (2) at about nine a.m., a light meal of bòlèm, some cooked rice and soup, and/or milk; (3) at twelve noon, chicken and rice, then (4) at seven p.m., millet porridge. Often a light meal of chicken and rice or even some fresh vegetables in season
262 is eaten in mid-afternoon. Because of the much richer variety of foods available from all over Nigeria, as well as the outside world, in tins, bottles or dehydrated condition, the city diet is more various and also somewhat more expensive for everyone, except the most indigent,

Clothing

294 The importance of clothing and cloth to the Kanuri is clearly observable in Bornu. Singer sewing machines (pedal powered) are everywhere in the area, only the smallest hamlets being, at present, without them. In Magumeri, there were between six and eight constantly in use over a seventeen month period. On market day more machines appear from the city and surrounding towns, in the special tailors en-
441 closure at the market. When the cash crop is sold to the "scale" men, there is always a store of cloth kept by these buyers, who know that the peasant is very likely to purchase some textiles with his cash crop
286 receipt. Although there are very few words in the language for col-
192 ours, different textiles or the same material at different phases of
• [521] wear are discriminated. There is a plethora of words denoting the different kinds of materials; and news of new brands, price changes, and

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[192] desirability characteristics take up much of the leisure time discus-
[521] sion among adult men. Cloth or clothing is also an integral part of
[431] gift giving at marriages, circumcisions and in maintaining superior/
[685] subordinate relationships. Thieves, knowing the liquid capital nature
of cloth or clothing, always steal these items as well as money, and
indeed more often, since it is more common for transportable capital
436 assets to be in the form of cloth or clothing than cash. Cloth was
originally a form of currency, i.e. a measure of value, and even today
these items are widely used as collateral when cash loans are taken
286 from neighbours or specialist money-lenders. Cloth and clothing as an
291 item of consumption thus has wide ramifications of meaning and desir-
ability as an object of value to the Bornu population, and forms one
of the principal expenditures in a Kanuri household.

291 The robes of men and women, their yardage, quality, work-
manship, embellishment, and age, reflect structural differences in Kan-
uri society. Men wear uni-coloured robes or work shirts, and all men
have at least one robe for special occasions. Long robes are often
worn over a smaller long-sleeved body length shirt, and may or may not
be embroidered with various designs, each having its own standard of
excellence on an ascending scale reflected in price. Women wear a long-
sleeved body length robe over a cloth wrapped around the body from the
waist down. Without the robe this wrap-around is pulled up to cover
the breasts as well, when outside the compound. To dress up, the
wrap-around becomes longer and forms a train, which is carried over
the arm, and a long piece of cloth is draped over the shoulders in a
sari-like fashion. Women also vary more widely in their tastes, which
range from several plain colours worn at once to prints (men very rare-
ly wear prints).